

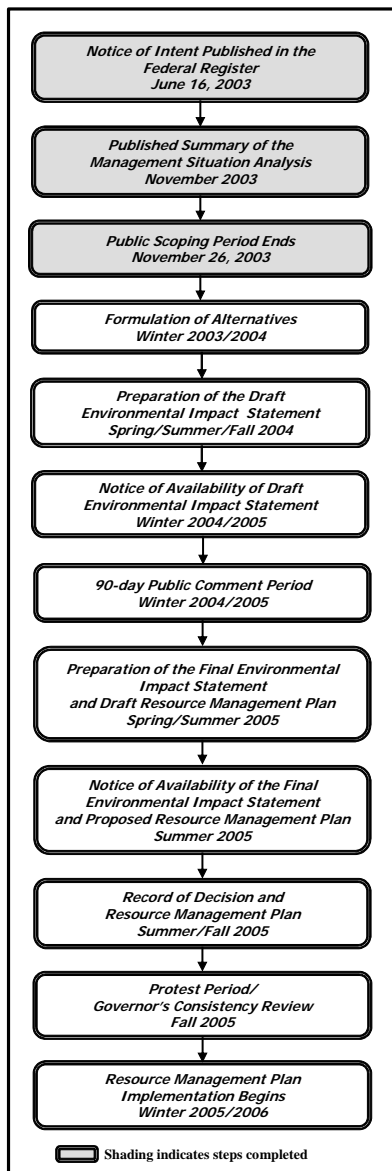


Kemmerer Resource Management Plan Revision Newsletter

312 Highway 189 N, Kemmerer, WY 83101-9711
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January 2004

Where do we go from here?



Letter from the Acting Field Manager

This is our first newsletter in a series that will provide you with information on what we are up to in the Kemmerer Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision process. We have chosen to send out newsletters to those of you on our mailing list to ensure that you are up to date on current events of the RMP revision.

Where Are We in the Kemmerer RMP Revision Process?

The RMP revision started with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* on June 16, 2003 to revise the Kemmerer RMP and prepare an associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The NOI also initiated "scoping," which is the process we use to identify your issues and concerns that relate to the RMP revision and its associated EIS. This newsletter provides a brief summary of the scoping comments we received.

What's Next?

We are now in the part of the process called "alternatives formulation," where we will use your comments and the preliminary planning issues and criteria identified to date to formulate a reasonable range of management alternatives for evaluation in the EIS. Management alternatives represent a complete and reasonable plan for managing the Kemmerer Planning Area.

We will then conduct an in-depth analysis of each alternative to determine its impact on existing conditions in the planning area. This analysis, referred to as the "effects analysis,"

will be incorporated into a Draft EIS, which is scheduled for publication in the winter of 2004/2005. There will be a 90-day public comment period in the winter of 2004/2005, during which you will have an opportunity to submit your comments on the Draft EIS. A Final EIS will be published in the summer of 2005, which will take your comments into consideration.

New Faces

I am pleased to welcome Mary Jo Rugwell as the new BLM Field Manager for the Kemmerer Field Office. I will continue as the Assistant Field Manager for Resources. I am also pleased to announce that Michele Easley, a long-time Kemmerer Natural Resource Specialist, has accepted the position of RMP Revision Team Leader.

Thank you for your participation and comments and I invite you to remain involved throughout the RMP revision process.

Arlan D. Hiner

Arlan Hiner, Acting Field Manager

Bureau of Land Management
Kemmerer Field Office

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Commonly Used Acronyms

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
NOI	Notice of Intent
RMP	Resource Management Plan
NOA	Notice of Availability

The Purpose of Scoping

Public involvement is an integral part of revising the Kemmerer RMP and preparing the EIS.

Scoping has been designed as a process by which lead agencies solicit input from the public and other interested agencies on the nature and extent of issues and impacts to be addressed in the RMP revision and the methods by which they will be examined. The official scoping period began with the publication of the NOI to revise the Kemmerer RMP in the *Federal Register* on June 16, 2003 and ended five months later on November 26, 2003. During the scoping period, several articles appeared in local and regional newspapers soliciting comments, a formal scoping letter was sent to the 673 names on the Kemmerer Field Office mailing list, three open house-style public meetings were held at locations throughout the planning area, an official Kemmerer RMP website went online in mid-October that provides ongoing updates and information about the revision process, and several public agencies were invited to participate in the revision process as cooperating agencies.



How We're Using Your Comments

Upon completion of the scoping period, we analyzed your comments to identify relevant issues to address in the Kemmerer RMP revision.



After all the comments were collected and the scoping period was closed on November 26, 2003, we performed a comment analysis to organize the comments in a way that provided more clarity as to the significant issues in the planning area. After we organized the comments, we published a document, called the Scoping Report, which is available for your review on our website and by request from our office.

We will be using the Scoping Report to ensure that the RMP revision and EIS address significant issues important to the people who will be affected by BLM's decisions. This report does not make decisions or set forth policies; rather, it summarizes the issues received by the BLM up to the end of the scoping period. Comments received after the end of the scoping period will be considered, as applicable, in the next steps of the planning process.

Major Issues Identified During the Scoping Period

During the 5 month scoping period, we received 51 comment letters via mail, the website, or at the scoping meetings. Below is a summary of comments received, categorized by revision topic. Included beneath each revision topic are the relevant preliminary planning issues, which were presented by the BLM in the NOI. Comments were submitted on all of the revision topics; those included below represent the focus of the majority of the comments. Other comments not

included below, but that are summarized in the Scoping Report, will be considered in the next steps of the planning process.

Fish and Wildlife

- ♦ Improve and protect crucial wildlife habitat and migration corridors.
- ♦ Assess and minimize the impact of resource development and roads on sensitive wildlife species and their habitat.
- ♦ Wildlife should be managed with consideration of existing resources and other multiple uses; and, resource damage should not be allowed due to wildlife populations.
- ♦ Adequately research, compile, and make available comprehensive information on all species in the planning area.
- ♦ Continue to encourage local, regional, multi-agency, and multi-jurisdictional management and coordination on wildlife issues.

Preliminary planning issues:

- *Wildlife habitat and management of crucial habitat and migration corridors*
- *Management and cumulative effects of land uses and human activities on threatened, endangered, candidate, and sensitive species and their habitats*

Lands and Realty

- ♦ Work cooperatively with landowners and coordinating agencies to determine the best management practices for small, isolated tracts of land that might be exchanged or sold to private landowners.
- ♦ Consider how new decisions might impact existing lease agreements and other programs, such as easements, land exchanges, allotments, withdrawals, disposals, split estate issues, exemptions and exceptions to lease stipulations and land tenure.
- ♦ Take into account private property rights, preservation of public land, resource conservation, minimal regulations, multiple use management, and mitigations for development.
- ♦ Encourage and implement, where feasible, multiple uses on BLM lands.

Preliminary planning issues:

- *Access to and transportation on BLM lands*
- *Land ownership adjustments*

Livestock Grazing

- ♦ Establish management programs that balance wildlife and grazing management; and, include habitat improvements and fencing techniques.
- ♦ Adequately assess the economic and management contribution of livestock grazing in the planning area.
- ♦ Continue coordination with ranchers, the public, and interested stakeholders.

Preliminary planning issue:

- *Livestock grazing*

Mineral Resources

- ♦ Identify the desired outcomes from oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development, considering uses such as endangered species protection, wildlife, prevention of habitat fragmentation, landscape and aesthetic appeal, air and water pollution prevention, revegetation, noxious weeds, and protection of surface owner rights.
- ♦ Address the relationship between surface land management and subsurface resource development, including the compatibility of exploration and development activities with the multiple-use and recreational uses mandate, as well as multiple mineral development.
- ♦ Explore and assess new technology available for mineral exploration and development that will reduce overall impacts to surface resources and water quality.
- ♦ Adequately and fairly assess the costs and benefits of mineral resource development in the planning area.

Preliminary planning issue:

- *Energy and mineral resource exploration and development*

Social and Economic Conditions

- ♦ Evaluate potential socioeconomic impacts of present and future mineral development.
- ♦ Consider the economic impacts of livestock grazing, hunting, and fishing.
- ♦ Adequately assess the socioeconomic impacts of all alternatives.

Special Status Species

- ♦ Implement management plans for candidate and sensitive species and their habitats.
- ♦ Address surface disturbing activities on threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant and animal species.

Preliminary planning issue:

- *Management and cumulative effects of land uses and human activities on threatened, endangered, candidate, and sensitive species and their habitats*

Vegetation

- ♦ Maintain and protect riparian habitats and vegetation communities important to wildlife.
- ♦ Incorporate aggressive management techniques and strategies to control the spread of invasive, non-native plant species and encourage the use of native plant species.
- ♦ Use prescribed fire and other vegetative techniques to restore and promote native species re-vegetation.

Preliminary planning issue:

- *Vegetation, including impacts of invasive, non-native species*

Water Resources

- ♦ Analyze and address impacts of coalbed methane development on water quality.
- ♦ Protect springs, seeps, and streams from potential pollution from surface development.

Preliminary planning issues:

- *Air and water quality*
- *Energy and mineral resources exploration and development*

Other revision topics (e.g., Cultural Resources, Special Designations, and Off-Highway Vehicles) also received a number of comments and were the focus of several comment letters.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the difference between an RMP and an EIS?

An RMP is a set of comprehensive, long-range decisions concerning the use and management of resources administered by the BLM. The RMP will:

1. establish goals and objectives (i.e., desired future conditions) for resource management and the measures needed to achieve those goals and objectives,
2. identify lands that are open and available for certain uses, including any restrictions, and lands that are closed to certain uses, and
3. provide comprehensive management direction for and/or allocate use of all resources.

In order to revise the RMP, BLM is required by Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to prepare an EIS. The EIS analyzes the environmental effects of a number of management alternatives, including a no action alternative and preferred alternative, each of which represents an alternative RMP.

Why is the BLM revising the RMP?

The existing Kemmerer RMP was completed in 1986. Since 1986, the RMP has undergone two maintenance actions that updated the plan. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires the BLM to develop RMPs and update and revise them when appropriate. The revision process approach includes building on experience, applying new science, and working with collaborators.

When can I comment?

The next official public comment period will begin with the publication of the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register* for the Draft EIS, which is scheduled for winter 2004/2005. BLM is always open to accepting comments at anytime during the RMP revision process. For more information on how to submit comments, refer to page 4 of this newsletter.

What is a Cooperating Agency?

During the scoping process, the BLM initiated contact with numerous local, regional, and state agencies and requested that they become cooperating agencies in the RMP revision and EIS process. Cooperating agencies are invited to participate in the planning process based on their having jurisdiction over similar areas as the BLM and/or having specific environmental expertise in an area impacted by the plan revision.

The following agencies have committed to being cooperating agencies in the Kemmerer RMP revision process:

- ♦ Bureau of Reclamation
- ♦ State of Wyoming
- ♦ Lincoln County Commissioners
- ♦ Lincoln County Conservation District
- ♦ Sweetwater County Commissioners
- ♦ Sweetwater County Conservation District
- ♦ Uinta County Commissioners
- ♦ Uinta County Conservation District

How You Can Participate

Now that the scoping period is complete and we have published a Scoping Report, we are moving on to alternatives formulation. Although the official scoping period is closed, we invite you to continue to submit comments and provide input, which will be incorporated into the next steps of the process. The website, www.blm.gov/rmp/kemmerer, will be updated with

information, documents, and announcements. We encourage you to submit your additional input electronically via the comment link.

You may also submit comments and/or questions by mail and over the phone. Feel free to call the RMP Revision Team Leader, Michele Easley, anytime at 307-828-4524 or send a letter to: Bureau of Land Management, Kemmerer Field Office, 312 Highway 189 N, Kemmerer, WY 83101-9711. We will send out another newsletter with updates on our progress after the alternatives have been formulated. The next formal comment period and series of public meetings for the RMP revision and Draft EIS are not until the winter of 2004/2005.

The Kemmerer RMP Revision Website

Go to our Internet website at www.blm.gov/rmp/kemmerer to view Kemmerer RMP revision documents, the latest schedule, pictures of the planning area, and more information on how to get involved.

The Kemmerer RMP Revision Mailing List

Individuals and groups that are already receiving this type of information in the mail will continue to be on the mailing list. Anyone wishing to be added or deleted from the list may do so by contacting Michele Easley, Bureau of Land Management, Kemmerer Field Office, 312 Highway 189 N, Kemmerer, WY 83101-9711 or call 307-828-4524.

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